

Global Economy, Local Politics: Indigenous Struggles, Civil Society and Democracy

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In this article I critically assess the globalist position which claims that the forces of globalization have fundamentally debilitated nation-states, and that the fate of progressive politics and social movements now depends on the degree and extent of international solidarity and the shaping of a transnational civil society (for example, Beck, 2000; Bronner, 1999; Brysk, 2000; Strange, 1996). Against this globalist, internationalist or “cosmopolitan” position, I argue that the nation-state continues to be a critical sphere for the imposition of ruling capitalist interests. Likewise, any substantial modification in the economic, political and cultural conditions of subordinate groups, communities and classes will have to be fought and won at this level. While international solidarity will always be welcome, the internationalization of politics, by itself, will not have a substantial impact on the domestic balance of forces. In fact, the main locus of politics should remain local if significant changes in the life chances of subordinate groups, communities and classes are the goal. These subordinate groups will be able to affect domestic state interventions in their favour only to the extent that they constitute themselves politically at the local level. In order to do so, their main challenge may be posited as follows: How can they extract concessions from the state without at the same time being co-opted? Facing this challenge successfully continues to require the construction of democratic organizations for struggle, an accountable leadership and grassroots participation in decision-making.

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Approach and Background

As an alternative to the globalist position, this article proposes a political-cultural theory of class formation, with a “bottom-up linkages approach” (BULA). The implications of this approach are both theoretical and political. Theoretically, BULA compels us to think through the new challenges brought about by neoliberal globalism, and the new relation between civil society and the state. By “neoliberal globalism” I mean the ideological approach taken primarily by the American government and most economic supranational organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in promoting an all-out market approach as a development model. Neoliberal globalism is variously known as, among other terms, Structural Adjustment Programs or the Washington Consensus. Its general state policy prescription for all countries is to encourage massive flows of capital across borders (into production or stock market speculation), cut public expenditures, reduce or eliminate protectionist barriers to trade, reduce or eliminate subsidies to local industries, balance budgets, lower corporate taxes, deregulate businesses, encourage foreign ownership and control and generally privatize economic relations (for elaboration, see Laxer, 2004; Otero, 2004a).

The theory of political-class formation presented here partially agrees with John S. Dryzek’s political proposition about the prospects for deepening democracy under global capitalism. For Dryzek, such prospects “are better in civil society than in the formal institutions of government, across rather than within national boundaries, and in realms of life not always recognized as political” (1996: 3-4). I agree with Dryzek on his first and third realms for deepening democracy, but only partially with the second one (“across rather than within national boundaries”). Political-class formation theory does not disregard the international sphere as irrelevant for political action, but it posits that if democracy is to be deepened, then it must be firmly rooted at the local level. It is in this sphere that regional cultures shape demands, states intervene in favour of their citizens (or not) and local leaders may become directly accountable to their constituents (or not), with more or less democratic modes of grassroots participation.

The empirical focus of this paper is indigenous peasant struggles in Latin America and the widespread solidarity that they have received from various quarters in the world. We have witnessed extensive and vigorous mobilization by indigenous peasantries throughout the region in the past two decades, so it is no coincidence that several books have recently been published on this subject (Assies, van der Haar and Hoekema, 2000; Brysk, 2000; Ramos, 1998; Van Cott, 2000; Wearne, 1996). Two issues that cut across all of the struggles of indigenous peasantries in Latin America are: the struggle for land and territory, and the struggle for cultural recognition of indigenous collective identities (Wearne, 1996; Otero 2003; Van Cott, 2000). Ultimately, I argue, both of these demands can only be dealt with by domestic, national states.

Abstract. This article critically assesses the globalist position which claims that the forces of globalization have fundamentally debilitated nation-states, and that the fate of social movements now depends on identity politics, the degree and extent of international solidarity and the shaping of a transnational civil society. Against this position, I argue that the nation-state continues to be a critical sphere for the imposition of ruling capitalist interests. Likewise, any substantial modification in the economic, political and cultural conditions of subordinate groups, communities and classes will have to be fought and won at this level. With an empirical focus on indigenous mobilization in Latin America, the article presents an alternative, political-cultural theory of class formation. It centres on the domestic level of politics, and adopts a bottom-up linkages approach. In this theory, the best chances for deepening democracy and improving the life chances of subordinate groups, communities and classes come from civil society at the local level. Finally, the article outlines the new political culture for a democratic-participatory leadership proposed by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Mexico, which is consistent with the bottom-up perspective offered here.

Résumé. Cet article présente une analyse critique et une alternative à la perspective mondialiste selon laquelle la mondialisation a complètement désarmé l'État nation et que l'avenir des mouvements sociaux dépend dorénavant des politiques identitaires, de la solidarité internationale et de la formation d'une société civile globale. Contrairement à cette position, je soutiens que l'État nation continue d'être une sphère sociale essentielle à la promotion et à l'imposition d'intérêts capitalistes dominants. Ainsi, toute amélioration appréciable des conditions économiques, politiques et culturelles des groupes dominés devra être gagnée à travers des luttes se déployant à ce niveau. À partir d'une étude empirique de la mobilisation de groupes amérindiens d'Amérique latine, cet article présente une théorie de la formation des classes sociales qui considère les facteurs de formation politiques et culturels. Mon analyse se concentre au niveau domestique et adopte un point de vue "ascendant" pour l'étude des relations sociales. Selon cette approche, les meilleures chances d'approfondir les processus démocratiques existants et d'améliorer les conditions de vie des groupes, des communautés et des classes sociales dominés résident dans la société civile locale. J'utilise comme exemple la nouvelle culture politique qui se développe au sein de l'Armée zapatiste de libération nationale (EZLN) du Mexique; elle s'avère compatible avec la position défendue ici, car elle est basée sur un leadership démocratique et participatif.

Although this discussion is about Latin American indigenous peasantries in general, greater attention is given here to the Mexican case for three main reasons: (1) Mexico experienced the first major revolution of the twentieth century; (2) at the turn of the twenty-first century it was once again the locus of one of the major indigenous peasant mobilizations in the region; and (3) Mexico has been at the forefront in implementing neoliberal reforms since the mid-1980s. Among other things, Mexico's revolution of 1910-1920 resulted in a major agrarian reform, contained in Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution. Through this reform more than 3.5 million peasant households became the beneficiaries of land redistribution, but many had to wait for more than three decades to receive land. At least one million land solicitors were still waiting for land grants when, as part of the neoliberal onslaught, new agrarian legislation was introduced in 1992, bringing to an end the agrarian reform. This landmark legislation was part of the preparations for Mexico to join Canada and the United States in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and contained three central points: the state no longer had the obligation for land redistribution, formerly mandated by Arti-

cle 27; the *ejido*, which had been the preferred form of land tenure under which land was awarded to peasant communities after 1917, could now be sold to other *ejidatarios* (the beneficiaries of agrarian reform) or turned into private ownership; and joint ventures between *ejidos* and private capitalists were encouraged by the law (Barry, 1995; Bartra, 2004; Otero, 1999).

Mexico has seen the most radical expression of contemporary indigenous peasant mobilization: the armed uprising by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, EZLN) in 1994. Unlike the revolution of 1910-1920, which resulted in institutions that attempted to assimilate indigenous peoples into mainstream *mestizo* national culture, the 1994 uprising has placed issues of indigenous rights and culture at the forefront of public debate. Following the 1994 uprising, Carlos Monsiváis (1999) claims that more books were published about the "Indian question" between 1994 and 1999 than during the rest of the twentieth century. Paradoxically, Native Americans were constituted as "Indians" by the conquering forces from Europe over half a millennium ago. By the late twentieth century, Native Americans had begun to use this same label, historically used to exploit and oppress them, to liberate themselves. In many cases, they are now using colonial documents to demand land rights, and they are adopting the term "Indians" to designate themselves.

Mexico's indigenous peoples constitute slightly more than the Latin American average for the percentage of a country's population, which is 10 per cent. The range in percentage terms goes from less than 1 per cent in Brazil to 30-45 per cent in Peru and Ecuador, to more than 60 per cent in Guatemala and Bolivia (Van Cott, 2000: 14). If one considers that Mexico's *rural* population is about 25 per cent of the total, and that the proportion of indigenous population is between 12 and 15 per cent (concentrated primarily in rural Mexico), then we can infer that about half of the Mexican peasantry holds an indigenous identity. The question is, how will Mexico's emerging democracy accommodate the demands of this substantial portion of its people? This is a relevant question for Latin America in general, but most pointedly for the five countries comprising 80 per cent of the indigenous population in the region: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru (Van Cott, 2000: 14).

One could argue that the manner in which Latin American states address their relations with their indigenous peoples will largely determine the character and depth of democratic transitions. The ruling classes have the choice to keep indigenous peoples as the most exploited, oppressed and politically excluded groups in society, or to finally acknowledge their cultural difference and institutionalize their rights, not only on paper but in fact (Otero and Jugenitz, 2003). To an increasing extent, though, this is not just a matter of choice from above. The scope of change will depend on indigenous mobilization from below, and hence the need for a theoretical and political bottom-up linkages approach.

Traditional Marxism to New Social Movement: Global Economy and Global Politics?

Two main approaches have been proposed to explain the rise of indigenous-peasant mobilization in Latin America. One has been represented by what may be called traditional Marxism, based as it is on the attempt to reassert class as a political determinant. The main cleavages for this approach emanate from the economy, are manifested in terms of class interests and determine political behaviour (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001). For the second approach, in contrast, indigenous mobilization would be part of new social movements, and thus their prime mover is assumed to be identity rather than class (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, 1998; Brysk, 2000).

In this section I will not address traditional marxism, for although it is one-sided in emphasizing class-based movements and disregards culture and identity, it does not advocate the globalist position of new social movements (for a sustained critique of traditional marxism and new social movements see Otero and Jugenitz, 2003). Instead, I will focus on one book exemplar of the new social movement-identity perspective, because it also advocates the globalist position. *From Tribal Village to Global Village* by Alison Brysk (2000) is an ambitious attempt to show how Latin American indigenous movements have been affected by identity politics and a transnationalized civil society, or what she calls “the global village.” In her view, global action and power flow across borders on three levels: interstate, where authority and security are paramount; markets, the realm for seeking profits or purpose (for example, subsistence); and civil society, or the locus for the power of meanings and identity. From civil society, argues Brysk, “norms and identities” become the rewriting agent of power relations. Based on her five case studies (Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Nicaragua), Brysk concludes that it takes a village—a global village, that is—with its meanings and identities to change power relations.

Brysk’s goal is to identify “promising indicators” for empowerment by the most marginalized peoples, who live on “the local-global cusp of the new system [of global capitalism]. The goal is to trace what works, while keeping in mind a history of contrasting cases of failure” (Brysk, 2000: 20). Brysk often provides bits and pieces of information on the role of class and structure that contradict her main arguments. Yet she usually tends to *interpret* them away with the prism of her “identity-politics” perspective alone. Although Brysk acknowledges a number of strengths in competing social-movement theories (such as the resource-mobilization and political-opportunity structures approaches), her main goal is to set them aside and assert the superiority of new social movement and identity politics. (For useful syntheses of social-movement theories see Buechler, 2000; Tarrow, 1994.) Part of the problem is that Brysk seems to confound the centrality of identity

issues in indigenous movements with the need for a one-sided, identity-politics theoretical perspective to explain them (2000: 35). Curiously, though, Brysk often alludes to how identity and international relations are constructed by “a combination of structure and agency” (see, for example, 2000: 36). Such abstract references to “structure and agency,” however, are not followed up by any concrete elaboration of the interactions between structures, identity and action (but see Archer, 1996 for such elaboration). Instead, ideas seem to have a life of their own, embodied in identities that lead to a “politics of persuasion” with global allies and states.

In her substantive chapters Brysk makes many references to how matters of class and culture become articulated, but inexplicably, she does not draw the logical conclusions. Some examples of the importance of the structure-identity interaction include the following mentions of actual movements: “The Katarista movement [in Bolivia] explicitly claims its dual character as a peasant and a cultural revival movement in the core ideology of ‘seeing with two eyes’ (class and culture)” (2000: 77). She quotes an activist cited by Wearne (1996: 175), and we learn that: “You can’t eat culture but you certainly can eat potatoes grown as a result of the cultural revival of old farming techniques” (2000: 144). On class and ethnicity, we find: “Class and ethnicity are intimately related throughout Latin America, with a clear hierarchy that correlates proximity to Hispanic identity with wealth and privilege (whites are wealthiest and have the most power, followed by mestizos, Indians and blacks, in that order). The majority of Indians are poor, and a high proportion of the poor are Indians” (2000: 147). Finally, after celebrating the Indian movement’s impact on transforming its constituency “from sub-human to political subjects,” Brysk brings in structural limitations that “...threaten the movement’s institutional and political achievements” (2000: 282). If this is strong recognition that structural factors matter, it becomes more important considering that Brysk’s indicators of “achievements” are limited to those in two realms: organization and identity, on the one hand, and institutional and policy change on the other.

While few would question that indigenous people have made substantial achievements in the realm of organization and identity, it is institutional and policy achievements that can make the greatest difference in improving their life chances. Such achievements, however, have tended to become primarily paper triumphs (Van Cott, 2000). For example, from a total of 17 countries that have ratified the 1989 Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on indigenous rights and culture, 13 of these countries are Latin American (ILO, 2003). The previous 1958 convention on indigenous peoples, which was inspired by modernization perspectives, was a typically assimilationist and integrationist document. ILO Convention 169, by contrast, acknowledges the rights of indigenous peoples to their own culture, autonomy and self-governance, which has implications also for their control over territory within nation-states (while ruling out

secession). And yet, while some of the 13 Latin American countries have also made some constitutional changes to formally declare themselves “multicultural” or “plurinational,” none of these countries has introduced enabling legislation to translate those precepts into defensible rights at the local level (Van Cott, 2000). It would seem that the governments of these countries ratified ILO Convention 169 primarily for image reasons, with little or no intention of implementing it (Díaz-Polanco and Sánchez, 2003). Therefore, the new challenge for indigenous peoples really begins at this point; it will be the movement’s organizational achievements, along with a consolidated indigenous identity, that could make the difference in making institutional and policy reality approximate the formal-legal successes, and hence the importance of a theory of political-class formation that takes adequate account of national-level factors.

The Political-Cultural Theory of Class Formation and Civil Society

The struggle for democracy must have as one of its primary goals the establishment of a viable and democratic political society [or state]...but democracy also requires the construction of a vibrant, vigorous and pluralistic civil society. (Diamond, 1992: 7)

If we can agree that strengthening civil society is critical for deepening democracy, then we need a theory to understand how subordinate groups, communities and classes in society become organized to struggle for their interests. Now, when it comes to the strengthening of civil society vis-à-vis the state, Antonio Gramsci is one of the classic social theorists of the twentieth century who provides perhaps the best insights for a theoretical understanding of the process. In this section I offer a synthesis of the theory of political-class formation. This is a process by which civil society becomes strengthened within semi-authoritarian or emerging liberal-democratic regimes (Otero, 1999; Otero and Jugenitz, 2003). Although this theory is phrased in terms of the political formation of social classes, it is equally applicable to groups and communities (Cohen, 2004; Martínez Torres, 2004; Singelmann, 2004).

Let us begin with Gramsci’s expanded definition of the democratic state. Rather than restricting his definition to juridical and political structures, Gramsci usually refers to the state as the sum of “political society,” or the realm of domination, plus “civil society,” or the realm of hegemony (1971: 263). The less democratic a state, the more it relies on domination or force. Conversely, the more a state is democratic, the more it relies on hegemony, or the consent of its people; democracy, says Gramsci, “must mean that every ‘citizen’ can ‘govern’ and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this. Political democracy tends towards a coincidence of rulers and the ruled...” (1971: 40).

Within this conception of radical democracy and the state, the central question for political-class formation theory is: how can subordinate groups, communities or classes become hegemonic or dominant, or at least gain the ability to push for state interventions in their favour? Political-class formation may be defined as the process through which direct producers and other exploited and/or oppressed social groups shape demands, form organizations to pursue them, and generate a leadership to represent them before the state and other organizations with which alliances are built. Political-class formation theory is clearly located in a post-Cold War era, one in which the struggle for socialism through violent revolutionary means is essentially over. The struggle for democratic socialism must now be waged by expanding liberal democratic structures and building a new hegemonic project around human needs and environmental sustainability (Angus, 2001). PCF theory proposes regional cultures, state intervention and leadership types as the mediating determinations between class structural processes and political-formation outcomes. Regional cultures form the basis to articulate an organization's demands. State intervention shapes the initial contours of the resulting character of a class organization. Finally, leadership types are intimately related to the modes of grassroots participation. Jointly, this relation determines the organization's chances to remain independent from the state, autonomous from other political organizations and its alliances with other movements and organizations. I will briefly outline how each of these mediations works in the political formation of indigenous peasantries.

Regional cultures of indigenous peoples have been closely related with both their relations of production and relations of reproduction, or what Otero (1999) has called "class structural processes." Production relations refer primarily to those between exploiters and exploited while reproduction relations are above all those among the exploited. With indigenous peasantries both types of relations—with exploiters and among the exploited—have contributed to the formation of indigenous and peasant collective identities. A key component of the relations of production for indigenous peasants comprises their relations with other ethnic groups, namely with the dominant groups of *mestizos*, *ladinos* or *criollos*. Now, it may well be that the key relation for indigenous peasantries with the dominant groups takes place through the market, and not through production. In either case, ethnic relations within asymmetrical production or market relations will tend either to reinforce ethnic identities, or to force the subordinate ethnic group into assimilation. In Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's terms (1985), the antagonism between the two subject positions constitutes their respective identities. Given the highly polarized relation between indigenous peoples and their exploiters and oppressors, it becomes easier to understand the centrality of their demands for cultural rights and autonomy: "Demands for the right to autonomy can only be fully understood in relation to a long history of oppression, exclusion and exploitation. Such has been the case of indigenous peoples" (Stavenhagen, 2000: 13).

To the extent that indigenous ethnicity is a central part of regional cultures in most of central and southern Mexico, it plays a key role in shaping demands or objects of struggle. Conversely, the reproduction of indigenous culture largely depends on continued access to land and control over territory. The remarkable fact about many indigenous ethnicities is that they have resisted assimilation for about half a millennium, despite the reality that they have always occupied a subordinate position as a group and that Latin American states have made systematic efforts at dispossession of their land and territory, genocide, assimilation and/or subordinate integration.

Political-class formation theory posits three main types of state intervention, each of which has different effects on class organizations. The first is state intervention that helps the material reproduction of subordinate classes, but the initiative for such policies comes from the state itself. In this case the political result is usually a co-opted organization that loses its independence from the state and reinforces bourgeois hegemony. We could say that the more organizations are co-opted, the more civil society becomes “confiscated” by the state or political society. Within an authoritarian regime, this entails that the realm of domination grows over the realm of hegemony.

The second, at the opposite end of the spectrum, is negative or repressive state intervention that may result in at least temporary demobilization, but potentially can also enhance the formation of independent and oppositional organizations for resistance. Indigenous organizations have most often faced negative and repressive state intervention since the time of first contact with Europeans. Repressive state policies have thus resulted in genocide and/or subordinated assimilation or integration of Indian peoples; but they usually also involve the loss of state legitimacy and a decline in bourgeois hegemony, with the possible rise of independent and oppositional organizations. In the latter case, no matter how unsuccessful such organizations may be in attaining specific demands in the midst of repressive state policies, their emergence may in itself be considered an achievement, and one that may eventually open political opportunities for further struggle.

Finally, a third type of state intervention is the result of independent pressure and mobilization from below. This is when oppositional organizations enter a subjective moment of struggle; that is, when they become political subjects constructing their own future. To the extent that these organizations become successful in both shaping state intervention in their favour and retaining their independence from the state, their character turns into popular-democratic. In alliance, these are the organizations that may promote an alternative, popular-democratic hegemonic project.

Leadership types (and corresponding modes of participation) determine whether the organization will remain independent from the state and autonomous from other political organizations, and the character of alliances with other social movements and organizations in civil society. Unfortunately, leadership types as a mediation or “variable” also have consider-

able dependence on state intervention, for the state usually has the possibility of attempting to co-opt the leadership of oppositional and popular-democratic organizations. But the ease or difficulty for co-optation and/or corruption to take place will depend largely on the level of democracy and participation in the organization.

Theorizing about leadership accountability and democracy in large-membership organizations in rural Mexico, Jonathan Fox (1992) argues that they can escape Robert Michel's "iron law of oligarchy," even if they go through cycles of participation, from high to low and back. In this context leadership accountability "refers to members' capacity to hold leaders responsible for their actions, but it also requires a degree of autonomy from external domination" (Fox, 1992: 23). The development of internal checks and balances is required as well: "Multiple, alternative channels for both direct and representative democracy shape the balance of power between central leaders and the base" (Fox, 1992: 28).

Three main types of leadership that have historically occurred in the Mexican case are as follows (Otero, 1999). (1) The "charismatic-authoritarian" leadership, interested primarily in maintaining personal control of the movement, may retain greater independence from the state, especially with a mobilized constituency, but it tends to be less accountable. (2) Conversely, the "corrupt-opportunistic" leadership may be more accountable initially, but also more susceptible to compromising the organization's strategic independence and autonomy. (3) Finally, the "democratic-participatory" leadership's principles and practice include raising the political and ideological consciousness of the membership and training new cadre who might eventually fill the leadership posts when this is suitable (due to completion of terms or unforeseen causes). Its interests (both short and long term) fully coincide with those of the membership. Needless to say, the first two types are the ones most often encountered in history. With the democratic-participatory leadership, however, there will be the greatest degrees of internal democracy and accountability, as well as the lowest likelihood for its co-optation and/or corruption. A democratic-participatory leadership type also enhances the likelihood for an organization to become popular-democratic (Otero, 1999).

With similar concerns to those of political-class formation theory, Marshall Ganz (2000) developed the concept of "strategic capacity" to explain why the resource-poor United Farm Workers were successful in their California union struggles against a resource-rich rival American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organizations. Among other things, Ganz's theorization is based on 17 years of militancy in the United Farm Workers. His compelling account challenges both resource-mobilization and political-opportunity-structures perspectives, which tend to give top-down explanations of social movement success, stressing access to resources or favourable political openings, respectively. In contrast, Ganz's "strategic capacity" relies on bottom-up factors to account for success: leadership,

organizational influences on actor's choices, and their interaction with the environment. Controlling for the environment, Ganz tests his hypothesis by contrasting the resourcefulness of the United Farm Workers against the resource-rich but older and highly bureaucratic rival, with top-down approaches to organizing. Given that the environment was the same for both rivals at three points in time, the United Farm Worker's strategic capacity explains its success. Ganz, therefore, supports the position argued here about the usefulness of a bottom-up approach: "While learning about how the environment influences actors is very important, learning more about how actors influence the environment is the first step not only to understanding the world, but also to changing it (Ganz, 2000: 1044).

Bottom-Up Change: Civil Society in Democratic Transition

The storm is here. From the clash of these two winds the storm will be born, its time has arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the wind from below is coming [...]. The prophecy is here. When the storm calms, when the rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world but something better. (Subcomandante Marcos, 1994: 16)

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet socialism represent major political watersheds for leftist and progressive struggles around the world. Not only was the top-down, state-led model of socialism discredited for its economic failures (Halliday, 1995), but the very traditional target of leftist political struggle centred on state power has also been seriously questioned. Part of the economic failure of state socialism should be attributed to its lack of democracy at most levels of social organization, from the shop floor in production to the state (Burawoy, 1985). Such lack of democracy resulted largely from the top-down approach of previous struggles. The vanguardist and elitist nature of leadership in Leninist theory of organization carried the seed of future state authoritarianism. Lenin's ideal of democratic centralism in practice became overly tilted toward hierarchic and authoritarian centralism, in the Soviet Union and in virtually all state-socialist experiences (Bahro, 1978; Bartra, 1992; Eckstein, 1994; Konrád and Szelenyi, 1979; Medvedev, 1975; Otero and O'Bryan, 2002).

Paradoxically, today's economic restructuring along neoliberal lines, which involves a decreasing role for the state in the economy (Biersteker, 1995), contains the possibility of introducing or strengthening democratic-participatory decision making in the resource-rich semiperipheral nations. These countries occupy contradictory positions of domination and subordination in the world system. They have an awareness of their dependency but also the means for contestation of neoliberal globalism (Laxer, 2004). However, given that the dominant fractions of their ruling classes tend to agree and promote neoliberal globalism (Valdés Ugalde, 1996), contestation must come from below. In turn, challenging neoliberal globalism from

below requires the existence and deepening of democratic governance. In Latin America, this democratization process is taking place endogenously at most levels of society, even while it appears that the economic requirements of globalization are being exogenously imposed. Eventually, deepening democracy in semiperipheral developing societies, in conjunction with a strengthening of civil societies in advanced industrial nations, may lead to an economic-model change, from neoliberal globalism toward one that is more compatible with a redistributive and environmentally sustainable model of development. The new society could resemble a popular-democratic and multicultural type of nationalism.

Given the seemingly overwhelming global forces imposing neoliberal globalism in Latin America, what kind of political strategies may be used to resist this project, and to promote one in favour of a popular-democratic and multicultural nationalism? I argue that struggles aimed at taking over the state (for example, armed insurgencies in Central America) have been the least effective in achieving justice and democracy, though not necessarily the least common. Conversely, popular-democratic movements of the past three decades have been focused on strengthening civil society and changing the relation of forces between civil society and the state (Evers, 1985; Foweraker and Craig, 1990; Eckstein, 1989; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, 1998; Pichardo, 1997). To the extent that this strategy proves more effective in advancing the interests of subordinate groups, communities and classes, then most revolutionary movements of the past few decades, which have targeted the state directly, should be reassessed. With the advantage of hindsight, one can see that all of the peasant-based rebellions in Central and South America during the 1970s and 1980s focused their efforts on taking over state power in the traditional Leninist mode (Brockett, 1990; Carr and Ellner, 1993; Castañeda, 1993; Palmer, 1994). By the 1990s, a combination of recalcitrant, exclusionary and repressive local class structures and the determination of the US government to stop the threat of communism in its backyard sealed the fate of Central American rebellions and revolutions. Apart from a few exceptions in Peru and Colombia, all other guerrilla movements have entered some form of peace negotiation with their respective states, in such a way that their activity has become confined to acting as regular political parties in political society (Rochlin, 2003).

The most novel contrast to the Leninist and vanguardist trend, as well as to that of political parties, has been represented by the EZLN's struggle (Díaz-Polanco and Sánchez, 2003; Gilbreth and Otero, 2001; Harvey, 1998). Unlike all previous guerrilla movements in Latin America, the EZLN does not seek state power directly. Rather it is counting on civil society to get organized and force upon the state a peaceful solution to the military conflict. From its first public communiqué in January of 1994, the EZLN revealed itself as an institutional actor. While it branded the government of

Carlos Salinas as illegitimate and the product of electoral fraud, it nevertheless called on the other two powers, the legislative and the judiciary, to do what they must to get rid of the usurper. This communiqué also invoked Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution as giving the EZLN legitimacy to rebel. This article reads: "National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government" (cited in EZLN, 1994). After seeing the tremendous mobilization of civil-society organizations to stop the conflict, however, the EZLN decided to change its armed strategy. There was another critical change in the EZLN's demands soon after the uprising. Although the vast majority of its constituency was made up of indigenous communities in Chiapas, the EZLN's initial grievances were typically class-based demands, summed up as: "work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace" (EZLN, 1994). Eventual dialogue with a multiplicity of indigenous organizations led the EZLN to include the struggle for indigenous rights and culture among its central demands.

The EZLN's focus on reinvigorating civil society vis-à-vis the state, however, was not without precedent. In fact, most popular movements in Mexico during the 1970s and 1980s had a different goal from that of political parties. Rather than challenge state power directly in political society, they wanted to strengthen the organizational existence of subordinate groups and classes within civil society to struggle for their rights. While doing so, most movements were very jealous to preserve their independence and autonomy (Cook, 1996; Foweraker and Craig, 1990; Hellman, 1994; Moguel, Botey and Hernández, 1992; Otero, 1999).

The EZLN's rebellion, therefore, has fortified this trend of consolidating civil society as the means to achieve a democratic transition in Mexico. Its novelty consists in having added the war of movements (direct military confrontation) to the war of positions (struggles in the cultural and moral realm) that had been contributed by previous social movements as a strategy to enforce a democratic transition. The hope was, however, that forcing a democratic transition would surely make a further war of movements unnecessary. It might be argued that Mexico's initial transition to electoral democracy in 2000 was chiefly due to the pressure exerted from outside of the political system by the EZLN, which compelled political parties to legislate changes in electoral rules that resulted in the election of an opposition candidate. Prior to the EZLN's uprising, opposition political parties, overwhelmed by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, usually passed electoral legislation that kept the authoritarian nature of the system virtually intact. At most, one might say that prior to 1994, electoral legislation changed primarily to modernize the authoritarian system, but not to allow for fair democratic competition (Camp, 1996; Cornelius, 2000;

Otero, 1996). Now that an electoral democracy has been achieved in Mexico after the 2000 presidential elections, a new relationship has to emerge between political parties and society. Formerly, political parties only talked among themselves. They must now engage civil-society organizations and other constituencies. If constituencies are satisfied, then politicians and their political parties might be re-elected. Otherwise, some democratic recourse to a vote of no confidence or a recall mechanism will have to be developed.

Toward a New Political Culture

We shall resist until those who govern, govern by obeying. (CCRI-CG EZLN, "Segunda declaración de la Selva Lacandona," 1994)

This section outlines the popular-democratic political culture that is being proposed by the EZLN, particularly with regard to leadership. Although *Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos* has no doubt been the principal spokesperson for the EZLN from its first public appearance, it should also be clear that the organization has tried to steer attention away from him. In fact, the very symbol of the ski mask indicates that, for the Zapatistas, "we are all Marcos" (or "*todos somos Marcos*," a popular slogan in demonstrations in support of a peaceful solution to the Chiapas conflict). This means that any other leader might assume his position, and he/she would remain anonymous. Furthermore, the maximum authority in the EZLN lies in the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command (CCRI-CG-EZLN, for its Spanish acronym), which is constituted by the EZLN's *civilian* support bases. Hence Marcos is the *subcomandante*, or sub-commander, for he must respond to this maximum civilian authority.

In contrast to the personalistic and hierarchical political culture prevalent in Mexico, the EZLN has conducted its decision making in a prefigurative manner, proposing that a democratic society should make decisions from the grassroots up. Despite the fact that it is an armed organization, the main decisions have been made democratically among its support bases (CCRI-CG-EZLN, 1994; Díaz-Polanco and Sánchez, 2003; Le Bot, 1997). In fact, one of the main slogans of the EZLN and its civilian arm, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (*Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or FZLN), is "to walk by asking" (*caminar preguntando*). According to an FZLN member, this is a key organizational method in the Zapatista tradition: to ask what people want (Maldonado, 2003). Thus, the EZLN has given credibility to its proposal for change by demonstrating that, in fact, there are possible methods for a popular-democratic, participatory government. As Luis Hernández Navarro has said, "The EZLN and the indigenous movement are social actors that are here to stay. Their mode of making politics is different from the usual one: They have one foot in tradition

and the other in modernity. In an era of uncertainty they have proven to be trustworthy actors. They do what they say and say what they do" (2001).

From its start, the EZLN leadership engaged its support bases in a dialogical relation (Johnston, 2000), in the sense given to this term by Paulo Freire (1970, 1973). This Brazilian educator used the term dialogical to describe the ideal relation that must exist between teachers and students, within the framework of education as the practice of freedom. From this perspective, the dialogical relation has to distance itself from the traditional or banking approach to education, in which the teacher deposits knowledge and information in students who maintain a passive attitude. In contrast to this, a dialogical relation presupposes that students already possess considerable knowledge and information. The main role of the teacher is chiefly to help them extract and systematize that knowledge. In doing so, students gain an awareness of their social situation, and teachers themselves learn from the students in the process. This is what happened with the young revolutionaries that arrived in Chiapas in the early 1980s and eventually formed the EZLN (Womack, 1999): They learned the indigenous ways and modes of participation. Although these revolutionaries initially had a typically vanguardist and elitist conception of organization, their relation with indigenous communities ultimately had to become a dialogical one. While they tried to impose their Leninist view of organization, they were ultimately defeated and indigenous leaders imposed their democratic forms of decision making (Le Bot, 1997). In part, this democratic culture was pioneered by the Catholic catechists of the San Cristóbal diocese during the 1970s, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz. They introduced the slogan "to govern by obeying" (*mandar obedeciendo*) eventually adopted by the EZLN (Womack, 1999).

Three critical events illustrate the EZLN's political practice and the new political culture that it advocates. The first is that Marcos did not appear during negotiations with the government representatives that led to the San Andrés Accords in 1996 (the only accords signed by the two sides so far, but not duly implemented by the government [Hernández Navarro and Vera Herrera, 1998; Harvey, 2002]). The EZLN's negotiating team consisted of nine indigenous representatives, including two women, from several regions of Chiapas.

The second regards the EZLN's hearing before Mexico's Congress in March of 2001, which was considered by the *New York Times* reporters as "a milestone for the Indian rebels in Chiapas" (Thompson and Weiner, 2001). Most observers had thought that Marcos would be the central figure among four speakers allowed by Congress, yet the hearing was attended by 23 EZLN indigenous commanders. *Subcomandante Marcos* did not even enter the building and Comandanta Ester, the spokesperson among the four speakers, explained why: she said that Marcos obeyed them, and that, as the chief military strategist, he had been ordered to stay out, because a military man had no place in their peaceful presentation before Congress. Instead,

the 23 indigenous commanders represented the civilian forces in the EZLN (Aponte, Becerril, and Pérez Silva, 2001).

A third event refers to a critical element in political class formation: how the leadership relates to other movements and the state. This is crucial in the establishment of alliances and the maintenance (or loss) of political autonomy. For the EZLN, then, it was a very consistent choice in 1997 to reject the help offered to it by the new Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), which launched a classic guerrilla offensive against the state in that year, with the goal of taking over state power. *Subcomandante Marcos* responded that the only help needed by the EZLN was that from civil-society organizations (Le Bot, 1997). With this response, the EZLN gave at least two messages: (1) It has no intention to take over state power, and (2) its main interlocutor to change society's power relations with the state consists of the organizations of other subordinate groups and classes that make up civil society and whose strategies and tactics are peaceful.

Overall, the EZLN's collective leadership is holding up well, has not been corrupted or co-opted, and continues to practice its chief democratic principles after a decade of varying degrees and intensities of oppositional confrontation with the state. Its constituency has not achieved any of its express demands to any significant extent. Yet, 38 municipalities took it upon themselves to implement the San Andrés Accords of 1996, and became "autonomous municipalities" (Burguete Cal y Mayor, 2000a; van der Haar, 2001). Therefore, at least on an organizational level, the EZLN has had considerable successes within its own support bases, by promoting the widespread organization of other subordinate groups, communities and classes in civil society. If it manages to maintain and reproduce the type of leadership and democratic modes of participation that it has generated so far, it will go a long way toward sustaining one of the most critical elements in the process of political class formation—*independence and autonomy*—while still being able to establish alliances and negotiate with the state. These are crucial attributes for sustaining its subjective moment of struggle. By the example it sets, the EZLN's influence in the wider political culture could prove critical for deepening Mexico's democracy from the bottom up.

Conclusion

This article questions the validity of the globalist position on several grounds. First, globalism would have us focus on identity politics, as if processes of collective identity formation had nothing to do with the material basis of social reproduction. I argue that, in general, but especially for indigenous peasantries, a solid theory of mobilization and political class formation must systematically address both material and cultural grievances. Political-class formation theory offers just this possibility by addressing three critical mediations between class structural processes and political outcomes.

Second, the globalist position advocates a focus on the goal of constructing transnational civil society organizations. This suggestion is as old as Marx and Engels' call in 1848: "Proletarians of the world, unite!" But after one-and-a-half centuries of this maxim, it is clear that if any class has become organized on a transnational scale it is the bourgeoisie, led by United States transnational and financial interests. This is expressed in suprastate organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. While anti-globalization movements have managed to disrupt some meetings of such globalist institutions, they can hardly match their strength, and they can hardly develop internal democratic mechanisms of leadership accountability. Therefore, even as I concede that international solidarity and organization are indeed important, I have argued that the process of building an alternative, popular-democratic project that contests neoliberal globalism must start from a bottom-up linkages approach. With a democratic organizational basis from the bottom up, linkages with international solidarity organizations may ultimately become similarly democratic at the global level. But in the foreseeable future the nation-state continues to be the most critical sphere of political action—both for the imposition of ruling class interests and for subordinate groups, communities and classes to become constituted politically and to shape state intervention in their favour. In dependent countries, this is particularly the case in what has been referred to as "semiperipheral" states: dependent, yes, but with the resources, institutions, and potentially the state capacity to resist neoliberal globalism (Laxer, 2004).

Third, on a more substantive level, the struggles of Latin American indigenous peoples have attempted to challenge the homogenizing policies of neoliberal globalism by gaining an economic, political and cultural space for autonomous development. The success of twenty-first century indigenous struggles must therefore be measured against this goal: Can the Latin American states move beyond liberalism, to accept and respect difference and recognize group-citizenship rights and indigenous autonomy? Redressing indigenous demands for autonomy will thus necessarily involve nothing short of a reform of the state (Díaz-Polanco and Sánchez, 2003; Harvey, 2002; Otero and Jugenitz, 2003; Van Cott, 2000). At a time when prominent political scientists are settling for a minimalist definition of democracy (for example, Karl, 1990; Mainwaring, 1992; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986), Donna Lee Van Cott (2000) argues that, on the contrary, to properly address the secular problems of exclusion for indigenous peoples, we need a type of democratization that approximates the indigenous worldview, one in which politics is embedded in a larger ethical and cultural universe, and citizens voluntarily obey the law because they accept it, rather than fear punishment. Ultimately this kind of change can only come from democratic civil-society organizations, from the bottom up.

Finally, I suggest some issues for future research. I have treated indigenous collective identities as simply another form of regional cultures in shaping movement demands. Is there also something specific to indigenous cultures that interacts with leadership types to favour democratic organizations, as suggested by Donna Lee Vancott (2000)? The historical record is mixed: some of the most traditional indigenous communities, such as Chamula, Chiapas, have an authoritarian internal structure and they have been co-opted by the formerly ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI (Gossen, 1999). However, the EZLN and other indigenous organizations have developed accountable leaderships. Jonathan Fox (1992) notes that, in a large-membership organization with mixed ethnicity, the election of an indigenous leader resulted in greater participation and accountability. To what extent is there a link between indigenous cultural values with more (or less) democratic types of leadership and modes of participation? Or, to what extent does internal democracy depend more on the type of organizational relations (top-down, dialogical, participatory and so on) established with external leaders? To properly answer these questions, we need comparative research, both across various regions of Mexico and from various Latin American countries. A comparative framework could also help us to understand why popular movements have been less democratic in some countries (for example, Colombia, El Salvador), and more democratic in others (for example, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico). To what extent are differences explained by specific national histories and cultures, by leadership types and organizational structures, and/or by their position in the world system (that is, peripheral or semi-peripheral)?

Most of these questions call our attention to spheres of social life that are neither strictly economic or identity based. Beyond such monocausal explanatory frameworks, they require approaches that look into the intersections of class structural processes with regional cultures, the specific forms of state intervention, and political-cultural features of organization and leadership. In addition, for cross-country comparisons their relative position in the world system would have to be taken into account. In a post-Cold War era, there is no reason (if there ever was) to stick to unilateral analytical frameworks. Rather, we are in the position to look for less dogmatic and more comprehensive approaches to understanding reality. A better understanding is likely to also offer better strategies and policies to improve the world.

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